



# National Child Care Information Center

*A service of the Child Care Bureau*

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## **TIPS FOR USING THE *FIVE STEPS TOOL* AND *LOGIC MODEL DIAGRAM***

### **TO START: IDENTIFY PROGRAM OR INITIATIVE TO EVALUATE**

The Theory of Change (TOC) Logic Model works best when planning a new initiative or program so that the process can guide the group from planning to implementation to determining outcomes. However, the process can also be effectively used for programs or initiatives that currently exist. To help the group determine the program/initiative to focus the TOC Logic Model planning on, discuss and reach consensus about the following questions:

- Is there an initiative that has new requirements, or requirements that are expected soon, around reporting results?
- Is there an initiative which is receiving increasing attention from administrators, legislators, the public?
- Is there an initiative that has been showing good signs of success, but data and other methods of collecting evidence have not been implemented yet?
- Has an agency committed significant resources to an initiative, and has it been implemented for a sufficient length of time so that it would be prudent (politically or otherwise) to collect outcome data?

### **STEP ONE: LONG-TERM GOALS**

*Broadly speaking, what do you hope to accomplish; what needs do you intend to meet?*

- ☑ If the initiative is in the planning stages, this step will be more complex as it will require “unearthing” assumptions, perhaps conflicting goals (if it is an interagency partnership) and establishing consensus.
- ☑ If the program is already established, then outcome goals probably have been articulated in some document, at some point in time. This is a chance to review, revise, and refresh everyone’s memory and understanding of the goals.
- ☑ Long-term goals are usually more broad or long ranging and it is OK for the language to be slightly less objective or easily measurable (within reason).
- ☑ Remember to include legislative mandates, mission statements, policy or other/priorities that more or less dictate the goals.

**Technical Assistance Needs or Questions:**

## STEP TWO: RATIONALE OR *THEORY OF CHANGE*

*What assumptions are you basing your goals on? How and why do you believe your goals will be achieved?*

- ☒ The rationale serves as the basis for evaluating the efficacy of the logic model—does it help the program goals, services, and measures to logically tie/link together, so that all can see how the program might move from service to outcome?
- ☒ It is important that the rationale is articulated in a few simple, clear sentences and that all key stakeholders agree with the rationale.

*Technical Assistance Needs or Questions:*

## STEP THREE: PROGRAM SERVICES

*Begin by defining the programmatic focus—what primary programs/interventions will be put in place to achieve the outcomes?*

*What activities will your program undertake and what resources will it use to accomplish its goals?*

- ☒ This is a critical step that is easy to rush through because it is so familiar. But without being really clear on the services and how/why they link to the goals, it will be very difficult to measure outcomes and/or see impact on long-term goals.
- ☒ These may already in place, but this is a chance to re-evaluate the link between program goals and program services.
- ☒ Consider money, staff, and equipment. Also consider what/who is needed to do the work.
- ☒ This could also be an opportunity to engage new partners in providing resources.

*Technical Assistance Needs or Questions:*

## STEP FOUR: IDENTIFYING SHORT-TERM AND INTERMEDIATE GOALS

*What goals do you expect to achieve in the short term – how will you know that the programmatic services are being implemented as expected?*

*What goals do you expect to achieve in the near future? What are the first indicators you expect to see to determine that you are on the right path toward achieving your long-term goals?*

- ☒ The goals might need to be rephrased into measurable language. Common language includes “improved,” “increased,” and “decreased.”
- ☒ Be realistic given the program intensity, duration, and resources.
- ☒ Be sure that the goals are written clearly and succinctly so that anyone would understand them—including parents and staff.
- ☒ Identify who else could and should be involved in the process and discuss ways to engage them.

**Technical Assistance Needs or Questions:**

## STEP FIVE: MEASURING OUTCOME INDICATORS

*What measurements will indicate that your program is making progress in meeting the outcome goals?*

- ☒ This is probably the hardest step. To make this reasonable, think about what kinds of data you currently collect on program services that could give you information on how well participants are meeting goals.
- ☒ An easily remembered acronym for identifying indicators is SMART<sup>1</sup>—specific, measurable, action-oriented, realistic, and timed.
- ☒ Identify data currently being collected to determine if it matches any of the identified outcome indicators. Discuss the quality of the data and any needed revisions.
- ☒ Discuss record keeping, accuracy, data entry/analysis, and use of technology.
- ☒ Discuss current reporting requirements and how the data are currently used.
- ☒ You can decide to conduct surveys, focus groups, observations, and interviews to investigate comprehensively how the program is being implemented.

**Technical Assistance Needs or Questions:**

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<sup>1</sup> This term is used in “W.K. Kellogg Foundation Logic Model Development Guide” (January 2004), pg. 47. Available on the web at <http://www.wkkf.org/Programming/ResourceOverview.aspx?CID=281&ID=3669>

**CONGRATULATIONS!**

Engaging key stakeholders in these five steps will go a long way toward building consensus, clearly identifying goals and activities, and developing an evaluation protocol. You will want to revisit and reflect on your work on these five steps—and come back and revise periodically.

Visual diagrams help many people stay focused on their goals. Transfer the key information generated through this process to the logic model diagram, which is attached.

The National Child Care Information Center does not endorse any organization, publication, or resource.

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